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THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

"I've Fallen and Don't Want to Get Up!"

1:17-20

Take a look at John in verse seventeen:

Revelation 1:17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, **"Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last."**

He described himself **as dead** until Jesus touched him and he was revived.

Revival. It's something we all want. But do we know what it is?

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said this about revival:

A revival is not the Church deciding to do something and doing it. It is something that is done to the Church, something that happens to the Church.

What is it that happens to the Church? I think that they get a vision of the risen Lord, Jesus Christ, in their midst.

The first chapter of the Revelation tells us that Jesus **is** in our midst! He's already here, walking among the candlesticks. John's experience can be ours – not literally, but spiritually.

We should experience revival reading this book. *Let's hope we do!*

Revelation 1:17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "**Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.**"

We saw what John saw in our last study. It was a vision of Jesus walking in the midst of His earthly churches. The vision overwhelmed John and he **fell** prostrate before the Lord.

How important is posture in worship? It can be very important! But let me add this: The most important thing in worship is Jesus Himself. It may seem obvious but when we consider Jesus it suggests our proper posture. If Jesus is the most important thing about worship then I don't want to do anything to detract from Him or distract others from Him. Thus it is perfectly proper in a gathering of believers to suggest proper and improper postures.

But wasn't John so overwhelmed he spontaneously fell? Sure, but he was alone, exiled, on a penal island.

Public worship needs guidelines. Having said that, I remind you that we are a little more open on Wednesday nights. Stand... Kneel... Lift your hands... Still without detracting or distracting.

Jesus **laid His right hand on** John and said **Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.** The moment John fell Jesus touched him and told him not to fear.

I've heard people say that we do not experience revival because we do not have a proper fear of the Lord. They usually mean we are too casual in our worship.

Well, the emphasis in this example isn't John's falling in fear. It is the Lord immediately reviving him and telling him **do not be afraid**.

Creating a more reverent atmosphere isn't going to get us to revival. A lot of churches are borrowing old, even medieval rituals and performing them to get a sense of fear.

We simply need to 'see' Jesus in His glory by faith. We need to know that He is here when we meet walking in our midst. Then, the moment we fear, He will touch us, revive us.

Jesus did not want John to fear. He removed John's fear by reminding him He was **the First and the Last**. It's a statement of His deity. He was **First** – existing eternally before anything was ever created. He is **Last** – existing eternally after everything is consummated.

If you have a personal relationship with **the First and the Last**, what is there to fear? He is the sovereign Lord over creation. All things are working together for good!

Revelation 1:18 *I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.*

Lives means *lived continuously*. It's another statement of His eternal existence. Though eternal as God, Jesus **was dead**. He *became dead* as a man in His incarnation. But He rose from the dead and, as the God-man, He is **alive forevermore**.

If at the end of verse seventeen Jesus was telling John (and us) that we need not fear because all things work together for good, then here in verse eighteen He was telling us why they do. We need not be afraid and things work together for good because God came into our world as a man. His life, death, and resurrection solved our problems.

Our two biggest problems were **Death** followed by **Hades**. **Death** is portrayed as a relentless power that all of us are subject to. **Hades** is (technically) the temporary abode of the human soul immediately after physical death.

Jesus came and died. The Bible says that when He died He descended into **Hades**. *Hades is not Hell!* **Hades** is described in Luke chapter sixteen as a temporary abode for souls divided into two compartments. One compartment is a place of suffering and torment for nonbelievers. The other compartment was called Paradise. It was a blissful waiting area for believers.

When Jesus said to the thief on the cross, **Today you will be with Me in Paradise**, He was talking about being in the Paradise compartment of **Hades**.

Jesus descended there to take all the believers to Heaven. Now when a believer dies he does not go to Paradise. He goes immediately to Heaven.

The souls of nonbelievers still go to **Hades** to await a final resurrection and then to be cast alive into Hell – a lake burning with fire.

So you see how Jesus has the **keys of Hades and of Death**. He has the authority over them. **Death** may take you before the Rapture but you need not fear it because you go to be with the Lord in Heaven and not to **Hades** and *never* to Hell.

Having revived John, Jesus gave him a commission:

Revelation 1:19 Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.

This gets the valuable verse award! This is Jesus Christ's own commentary on the Revelation. He tells us how to approach the book.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ is not an impossibly difficult, closed book that no one can really understand. It is one of the few books, in fact, that gives you its own outline.

Write the things which you have seen. What John had seen was the vision of the risen Lord walking in the midst of the seven candlesticks with seven stars in His right hand. Chapter one is the record of the things John had seen.

Chapters two and three will contain the second division, **the things which are**. The seven churches, representing the entire church age, are the things which are.

Then from chapters four through the end of the book we read about **the things which will take place after this**. We'll see the church resurrected and raptured into Heaven; the seven years of the Great Tribulation; the Battle of Armageddon; the second coming of Jesus; the one-thousand year reign of Jesus on the earth (called the Millennium); the final judgment of Satan, the fallen angels, and nonbelieving humanity; the destruction of this universe; the creation of a new universe; and we'll get a glimpse at our lives in eternity with God.

John had seen seven lampstands and Jesus walking in their midst holding in His right hand seven stars. The Lord interprets those images for him (and us) in verse twenty.

Revelation 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

A **mystery** is something previously concealed that is now revealed. It's an example of the fact that if a sign or symbol in the Revelation isn't already to be found in the Old Testament then it is clearly defined for you.

The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches. We have a decision to make. The word **angels** means *messengers*. But are these seven angels supernatural beings or human beings?

There are arguments to be made for them being supernatural. I won't take time to go through all the arguments. I just want to mention that some good scholars, men like Dr. Henry Morris, argue that these are angels in the normal sense of the word. Thus each church would have its own guardian angel. It's not too far-fetched to believe churches have angelic protection. In fact, it's kind of cool!

The majority of commentators identify these **angels** as the human *messengers* or leaders of the individual churches. We would call them the pastors of the seven churches.

This makes the most sense to me. Each of the seven letters is addressed **to the angel of the church in** the particular city. The letters are intended to be shared by the **angel** with the congregation. The contents of the letter are about the behavior and beliefs of the saints in those churches.

For example: The letter to the church at Ephesus begins, **To the angel of the church of Ephesus write...** Was Jesus writing to a supernatural **angel**?

If He was then what He said makes little sense because it is directed to the saints in the church. He said, for example, **I know your works, your labor, your patience...** In what sense could that even begin to apply to the church's guardian angel?

I can understand the concept of a guardian angel for each church. I just cannot see anywhere in Scripture where an angel is held responsible for the behavior of the saints; or where an angel is spoken to as if he were a member of the church; or addressed as if he could influence the church.

These **seven stars**, then, are the men leading the church. They are the pastors of the seven churches.

They're not **stars** like the celebrities in *Dancing with the Stars*! Some might act that way or be treated that way. They are **stars** in the sense of receiving light from the Lord and then illuminating Him to the congregation.

Jesus' **right hand** is for these pastors a place of both authority and of accountability. Your pastor has an authority delegated to him by Jesus Christ to present the Lord through His Word. One day your pastor will give an accounting to Jesus of his faithfulness to his calling.

The writer to the Hebrews sums up the relationship between pastor and saint like this:

Hebrews 13:17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

The pastor has authority but it is tempered by knowing he must give an account for his ministry.

Jesus, through John, gave us this wonderful encouragement. If we're in a church Jesus has raised-up, with the right leadership, then He is in the midst of us.

Jesus **is** in the midst of His church when we gather. It is a spiritual truth, a spiritual fact, a spiritual reality. We ought to be able to 'see' His glory by faith. When we do we feel like we're dead but He immediately revives us.

Then He commissions us. He puts us into service. John's was to **write**. Ours is to read what he wrote and **hear what the Spirit says to the churches**. He wrote commending, but mostly correcting the churches.

I'm not sure whether we get revived then see the corrections we must make; or whether we make the corrections and it brings revival.

I don't care the order as long as I see the Lord and am revived!